

CHAPTER 4

Improving a Little Landscape Garden, 1934-1943

People associated caves, especially those incorporated into gardens, with contemplation and creativity in the classical world of Greece and Rome. As places where knowledge or poetic inspiration followed from encounters with the underworld, it is little wonder that some of these portals engendered their muses, oracles, and nymphs to offset the prevailing ambience of disorientation and mystery.¹ Other naturally occurring features like waterfalls, pools, springs, rock outcrops (especially if these furnished a vista), and groves of trees have also possessed intellectual and mythological significance.² These elements became focal points in Renaissance gardens, at a time when the rich and powerful wanted to recall the classical past while molding their domestic environment to suit their aesthetic sensibilities. The development of “taste” took a new turn in England of the eighteenth century, where the rigid lines, order, and formality that dominated Italian and French estates were cast aside for more informal landscapes imitative of wild nature. Some estate owners created their own grottos, pools, and groves in this new template, embellishing them with a greater diversity of plants than what Britain could offer—many being American species only recently described by botanists. They chose serpentine paths and carriage roads as the main circulation devices since the gardens had now fused with whole parks, the latter being formerly uncultivated and used only to enclose deer or other game.³

In being designed to yield individualized “scenes” alluding to classical literature or pastoral perfection, the landscape gardens became so popular among the elite that they conditioned a collective response to nature. As “pleasure grounds” such scenery furnished models for the eventual appearance of public parks during the nineteenth century, at a time when industrial capitalism increasingly pushed its workforce into rapidly growing cities.⁴ Designers of the new public spaces wanted to bring the country into city life, just as the early Romans and subsequent *litterati* desired, believing that “rustic” facilities in “naturalistic” landscapes best allowed the populace to enjoy fresh air, exercise, and moral improvement. The first city parks in the United States followed European precedents, but the idea of establishing public pleasuring grounds beyond city limits can be largely attributed to the opportunities presented by closing the once uncontrolled frontier. It also signaled acceptance of the idea that one should travel away from the distractions of towns and cities to experience nature, but as a cultural construction perceived as more primitive and egalitarian than urban life, and idealized in some places to be an Edenic garden.

Tourism initially developed with the rise of informal landscape gardens in the eighteenth century, since the former followed from the wealth used to create the latter. It did not take English tourists (as well as wealthy western Europeans and even Americans) long to go beyond art galleries and the pastoral landscapes of Italy to add experiencing the “sublime” as part of their itinerary. Many believed that knowledge and perhaps inspiration could be found in jagged mountains, a stormy sea, or wherever the scenery aroused feelings of awe and reverence. The sublime could even include caves, provided they were large and interesting enough to attract the few who undertook the rigors of travel. The Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, for example, could fit into any nineteenth century “grand tour” of the American sublime—one that first included the Hudson River Valley and Niagara Falls, but subsequently expanded across the continent to embrace wilder (yet also Edenic) places like Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon.⁵ Through a kind of perceptual lens attuned to seeing scenery as art in nature, pursuit of the sublime eventually helped link nascent regional identity with places like Oregon Caves.

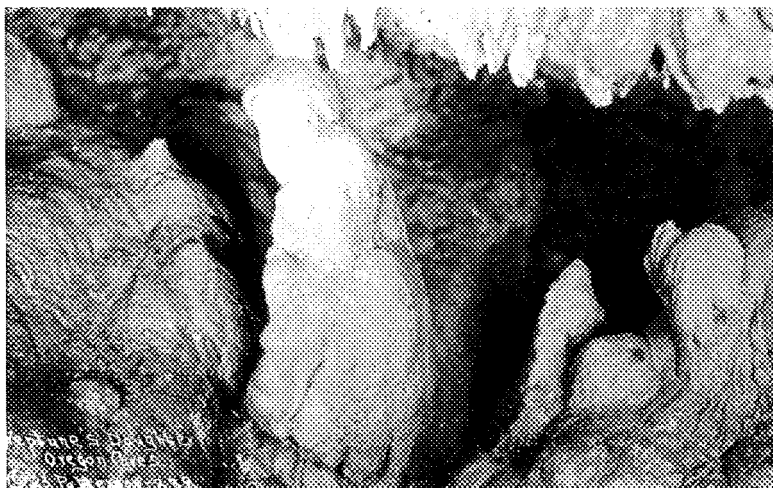


FIGURE 43. Neptune's Daughter was one of many classically-based names on the tour route. Photo by Frank Patterson, 1923. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

New lights, but an old script

Pursuit of the sublime went beyond merely retaining the cave as public property and attempting to protect its components from souvenir seekers. In pitching the cave as a curiosity, both private promoters and the Forest Service guides encouraged visitors to project familiar shapes, animals, personas, and objects onto subterranean passages and formations.⁶ While they might describe formation of the cave as a geological process, at least in a few places, the time required for that to occur remained distant and unknowable. The cave was thus, as in the ancient world, shrouded in mystery and distinct from the surroundings above ground, so visitors were encouraged to engage their imagination and project their fancy as they moved from room to room. Even one of the forest supervisors employed Gothic imagery drawn from the language of the sublime in early 1917 when he quoted a visitor account on his report to the district forester, one intended to justify further development of the Oregon Caves:

“...one does indeed feel this underworld region of strange, fantastic beauty is part of a fairy story land of one’s youth. For countless ages the series of galleries, passages, rooms, chimneys, and “bottomless pits” have been slowly carved from the solid limestone rock

by the dissolving effect of water. The walls are thickly studded with marvelously wrought forms of queer looking flowers and vegetables that appear as if just picked from some giant's garden. Occasionally, a huge jawbone, filled with vicious looking teeth, that one imagines belonged to some prehistoric monster, protrudes from a shadowy recess."⁷

Guides were needed in the interest of visitor safety and for deterring vandalism, but they also made the company's investments at the monument a paying proposition. None of them lasted longer or had as much effect on visitor experience at Oregon Caves than Richard W. "Dick" Rowley. Originally hired as a forest guard in 1913, Rowley hitched his wagon to the company in 1923 and then spent all his summers at the monument until his retirement in 1954. Many of the names for rooms and formations on the tour came from Rowley and were perpetuated by guides who trained under him.⁸ More than that, Rowley began to personify the Oregon Caves by 1922.⁹ His stories enhanced the scripted experience of a cave tour, but Rowley as a single and seemingly self-sufficient mountaineer also played the role of a hermit caretaker that eighteenth century visitors might have encountered at a garden grotto. He possessed enough practical knowledge as an ex-miner and one-time railroad worker, however, to do more than spin stories by directing the company's maintenance operation at the monument.¹⁰

Throughout the 1920s Rowley periodically assisted with planning for improvements like the exit tunnel and lighting system. The tunnel's completion in 1931 dictated some adjustments be made in the route that he and other guides followed, but the content of what they presented along the way largely remained within the realm of pointing out fancied creatures and telling stories that had the occasional folksy allusion to Greek and Roman mythology.¹¹ Electric lighting could greatly enhance story telling, given the wider range of effects possible over those conducted with carbide lamps. Its intent was communicated by a Forest Service official who quoted the electrical engineer accompanying him to the monument in 1930, writing how visitors should be "unconscious" of the lighting system so that their attention might remain "entirely focused" on the cave.¹² After cautioning against over-illumination, he then promoted the use of colored lights in *Paradise Lost* to create an effect known as "Dante's Inferno" on



FIGURE 44. Dick Rowley at the cave entrance, about 1938. (Oregon Caves Company photo, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

the floor of the Ghost Room. Such entertaining gimmicks (which resembled, at least in spirit, those tricks once used in some of the English landscape gardens to surprise and amuse visitors) furnished a way to culminate the tour before visitors climbed out of the Ghost Room toward the exit tunnel.¹³

The first lighting system certainly had its shortcomings, since defective switches and the underpowered diesel engine intended for generating electricity at the power house in the canyon meant that some members of each tour group still carried carbide lamps. This latter type of illumination became a thing of the past in 1938, when an overhead line finally connected the monument with commercial power at Holland.¹⁴ Rewiring inside the cave included laying armored cable and installing water tight fixtures, all at government expense.¹⁵ Congress appropriated \$20,000 for the line and rewiring, expenditures partly justified because feeder lines could be built from it to farms located at the upper end of Sucker Creek.¹⁶

A willingness to subsidize infrastructure that directly benefited the company's operations was not limited to that one appropriation for a utility connection, in that more improvement of the tour route took place prior to arrival of the power line through the efforts of Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. Rowley (who at 65 years of age again found himself on the government's payroll)

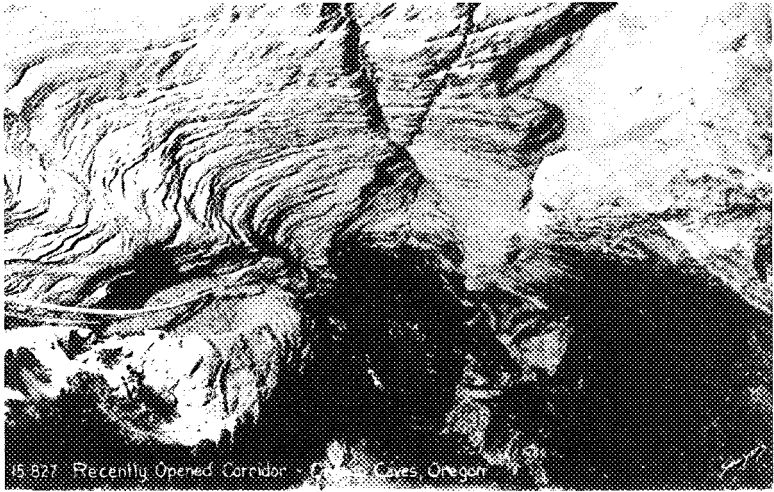


FIGURE 45. Part of the connection built by CCC enrollees in the late 1930s, known as the Passageway of the Whale. (Photo by Sawyers, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

supervised at least a portion of the work beginning in January 1935. This project consisted of providing more headroom in the cave (due to the increased average height of Americans) and widening the trail in places. Enrollees also built a masonry wall and seats in the Ghost Room, then installed additional pipe rail in conjunction with fashioning more than 300 marble steps in the cave.¹⁷ In continuing with their stated aim of making the cave accessible to the “most timid tourist” while also protecting its “picturesque features,” the CCC went underground again in 1937. This time they constructed an eighty-foot connecting tunnel between the crossing of a stream called the “River Styx” and a room called “The Wigwam” in order to eliminate backtracking over some six hundred feet of the tour route.¹⁸

The connecting tunnel essentially completed the one way trail corridor needed for tours taken by more than 40,000 visitors in 1938. With its labor inexpensive and plentiful for a time, the CCC projects in the cave accelerated what entrepreneurial effort began in the nineteenth century—the process of making the monument commercially viable as a resort. Improving the underground trail corridor constituted only one facet of the CCC contribution to improving a circulation system started by Burch and Harkness, but one that the Forest Service greatly expanded both inside the cave and above ground. The enrollees nearly finished a

resort development spread over two sites (the monument and Grayback) by the time that the CCC program was disbanded in 1942, but one whose form had fully matured into a landscape garden where the cave tour represented just one facet of what visitors could experience at the site.

Camp Oregon Caves, NM-1

In addition to providing unskilled labor in the form of enrollees who numbered between 75 and 200 at any one time, the CCC program also paid the salaries of landscape architects and engineers. The professional staff designed individual projects while skilled tradesmen (called locally experienced men or LEMs) supervised crews of enrollees. Allotments for individual projects tended to remain small (usually \$8,000 or less) their number was considerably greater over the program's life (1934 to 1941) than what the Forest Service and its concessionaire had been able to undertake over the previous decade. CCC project design generally followed earlier precedents, though it also reflected how the National Park Service designed buildings, trails, walls, site features like steps or pools, as well as plantings during the 1930s. Most of these had their antecedents in earlier park design that could be traced back to landscape gardens that included model villages centered on structures built with native materials, ornamental plantings that blended with their surroundings, and circuit trails intended as the primary way to experience the site.

When the CCC arrived on the Siskiyou National Forest in 1933 they formed five camps (each being 200 men when at full strength; side or "spike" camps implied a size less than that threshold number), with no projects taking place at Oregon Caves. Most of the work during that initial six month enrollment period of May to November centered on road building and firefighting elsewhere on the forest, though new administrative structures such as the Redwood Ranger Station near the highway junction in "Caves City" received passing mention in one Forest Service accomplishment report.¹⁹ Embellishments considered recreational by nature, like a log portal and new restrooms in the monument's lower parking area, received only brief consideration before being deferred to the future.²⁰ Spike camps had been difficult for the Forest Service to obtain that first period because such requests had to go through the War Department (the Army recruited and

processed the enrollees) that at first experienced some difficulties in mobilizing enough officers for its command structure.²¹

By the spring of 1934, however, the problems of providing enough camp commanders and technical supervision had eased enough for a contingent of thirteen men from Camp Wineglass in Crater Lake National Park to establish a spike camp located near the confluence of Grayback and Sucker creeks for the time being. By summer the spike camp grew to roughly fifty men who made use of a messhall, washhouse, latrine, and some tent platforms.²² The enrollees were preceded by a landscape architect funded through the program, Armin Doerner, who reported on what he believed could be accomplished by the CCC at Oregon Caves. Doerner discouraged siting even a small camp at the monument, owing to the fact that the canyon below the Chateau simply could not accommodate large numbers of enrollees housed in tents, much less withstand the impact of having to move supplies from the main parking area on a regular, if not daily, basis. The enrollees thus remained at the spike camp until a better site could be found.²³

Much of the CCC work at the monument during the summer of 1934 was confined to reducing the fire hazard posed by debris and down fuels, but more ambitious projects could be attempted with a full camp of 200 enrollees over the following winter. The full camp resulted from a chain of events that began in September, when the Army rejected a NPS proposal to deploy enrollees stationed at Crater Lake National Park (who would otherwise be snowbound during the winter) to Lava Beds National Monument. NPS director Arno Cammerer then asked for the winter camp to be located at Grayback, assuring the Forest Service that CCC personnel not needed for work at Oregon Caves could be engaged with projects on the Siskiyou National Forest. This shift prompted funding for a camp consisting of wood frame structures to be built north of the highway, on a spot once known as Grimmett's Ranch. Carpenters followed standard plans produced by the Forest Service to erect barracks, officer quarters, an administrative building, a mess hall, and latrines that October, completing most structures prior to the arrival of another 47 men from Crater Lake at the end of the month.²⁴

Camp Oregon Caves attained full strength of 200 enrollees by December, given the thinking that if snow conditions were too severe for work at the monument, careful planning might allow a

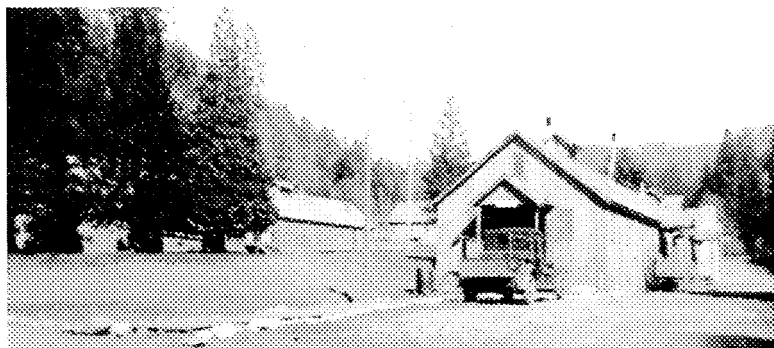


FIGURE 46. Camp Oregon Caves in 1935. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

seamless shift to Forest Service projects at a lower elevation. Despite earlier discussion of the camp being jointly administered between the two land management agencies, the NPS bore all the expenses through the CCC funds allotted to it and thus assumed charge of all work projects.²⁵ Heavy snowfall through the winter of 1934-35 meant about 60 percent of the manpower provided by enrollees went toward Forest Service projects. These centered on construction of a road toward French Peak and building a new campground located about one quarter mile west of the one established in 1922 at the confluence of Sucker and Grayback creeks. Clearing for “Grayback Forest Camp” started in late October and was soon joined by other CCC projects at the site, ones that had the enrollees building latrines, campground roads, a community house, and an entrance sign “motif.”²⁶

Development of Grayback Campground

By the time the CCC departed Camp Oregon Caves for good in November 1941, Grayback Forest Camp covered ten acres. Unlike the antecedent Sucker Creek camp, the facilities at Grayback included twenty fireplaces and tables linked to individual sites.²⁷ These were located along loop roads with parking for cars confined to what were called “garage spurs,” defined by boulders or logs so that damage to vegetation caused by automobiles could be minimized. The so-called “Meinecke Plan” (named for the leading proponent of this type of car camping, whose ideas were quickly adopted by the Park Service and Forest Service in the early 1930s) also included planting shrubs and trees. Adding native

vegetation at the site could not only enhance the campground's appearance, but also protect it from damage by confining vehicular circulation. Transplanted tree and shrubs could screen individual campsites from each other, as well as erase the view that passing motorists might otherwise obtain from the highway.

Development of the Grayback Forest Camp came as the CCC and other public works programs pushed the total number of national forest campgrounds with at least some facilities to 3,000.²⁸ Far fewer than that number possessed amenities equal to those at Grayback during the Great Depression, much less its proximity to a recreation center like Oregon Caves. With this in mind, the Forest Service proposed in 1939 that the CCC build an organization camp to serve groups such as the scouts, churches, and service clubs. Gust Lium, who had worked as a general construction foreman on the Siskiyou National Forest after completing the Chateau in 1934, sketched a mess hall for the camp, one to be built about half mile above Camp Oregon Caves on Grayback Creek. It was to be the initial structure in an organization camp that Forest Supervisor Edward P. Cliff envisioned as including a lodge and accommodations for a hundred or so people to be housed in eight to twelve separate dormitories.²⁹

Although NPS staff in the field wanted to make the organization camp the primary CCC project for the winter of 1939-40, officials in Washington, D.C. put a damper on this undertaking by disapproving Lium's drawings.³⁰ The sheets supposedly did not meet NPS standards, yet the landscape architects and other agency staff did not object to Lium's drawings for a community house and restrooms at the Grayback Forest Camp in 1935, or his design used to rebuild the Cedar Guard Station and its adjacent garage in 1937.³¹ The latter two projects involved moving structures originally constructed in 1933 to a new location, then revamping their interiors, re-roofing them, and sheathing both with cedar bark like the buildings at Oregon Caves.³²

Demise of the organization camp while still in the planning stages came at a time when funding for the CCC began to decline rapidly, though this effort represented the last attempt by the Forest Service to establish a resort in the Grayback vicinity. The larger political context needed to explain why the NPS opposed a CCC project on national forest land had to do with agency leadership asserting what it saw as the Park Service's leadership role in the field of organized camping, though this was manifested more



FIGURE 47. CCC sawmill near Cave Junction, about 1937. (NPS photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

often in state parks of the time.³³ The Washington office of the NPS published *Park and Recreation Facilities* (1935) as well as *Park and Recreation Structures* (1938), books aimed at influencing how state parks (as well as some city parks) were designed and built with CCC funding.³⁴ Although the CCC also brought about a tremendous increase in the number of national forest campgrounds with facilities, the NPS (at least at the Washington level) saw the more highly developed organization camps administered by the Forest Service as competition. Since supervising the development of organized camping outside the national parks represented an expansion of NPS responsibilities, Park Service leadership did not want CCC enrollees it supervised to build organization camps for the agency's main rival. Officials closer to the ground, like those at Crater Lake, cautioned against alienating the Forest Service. Interagency cooperation appeared to them as critical in operating Camp Oregon Caves for some eight months each year, not only as a base from which to further develop the monument, but also for maintaining a sawmill which supplied lumber for CCC projects at Crater Lake and Lava Beds.³⁵

CCC projects at Oregon Caves

Despite the occasionally caustic relations at the Washington office level between the Park Service and Forest Service during the 1930s, Camp Oregon Caves could generally be seen as a model of how the two agencies cooperated to their mutual benefit. Not only did enrollees undertake a number of Forest Service projects (they even built an airport several miles south of the Redwood Ranger Station) in addition to improving the Grayback Forest Camp, the CCC provided the single biggest boost in developing the monument for a growing number of visitors. Some of this came in the form of upgrades to the utility infrastructure, starting with construction of a waterline from the cave entrance area to a dam and intake on Lake Creek during the winter of 1934-35. Almost two miles of pipe were laid in conjunction with the enrollees building a storage tank reinforced with concrete and holding 38,000 gallons.³⁶ Other utility work at the monument included sporadic upgrading of the sewer system starting in 1934, and constructing a storm drain below the concessionaire's cabins in 1938-39.³⁷

The CCC also added to the monument's building stock, though all decisions about siting and design had to go through the landscape architects supervised by the NPS. One of their first projects at Oregon Caves involved considerable excavation by hand before starting work on a ranger residence, a structure needed because the NPS intended to station one of its seasonal employees there during the summer. Once the landscape architects concluded that an entrance or "checking" station was not required in the main parking area, Francis Lange drew the final plans for a residence to be located adjacent to the company's cabins, on a site overlooking the cave entrance area.³⁸ He noted some uncertainty about funding the project, given the nationwide cap of \$1,500 on any single CCC building project. Added costs of excavation, sub-flooring, and an extra bedroom intended for visiting NPS officials drove the price tag to more than \$3,000 by the time enrollees completed the residence in June 1936. Other structures built or revamped by the enrollees from Camp Oregon Caves, however, averaged only \$500 each. These included a new space for storing carbide lamps (replacing the "studio"), a combination garage and

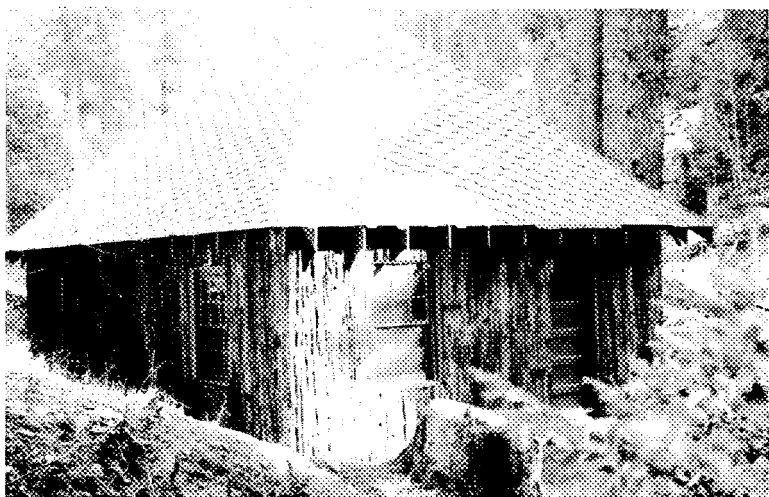


FIGURE 48. Diesel house in the canyon of Cave Creek after CCC improvements, 1936. (NPS photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

tool house located further west from the cave entrance along the service road, and adding a roof and cedar bark sheathing to the diesel plant situated below the Chateau.³⁹

A “reception center” came as the result of NPS officials reversing their decision during the summer of 1940 about the need for another structure in the main parking area. They eventually settled on a building designed by NPS architect Cecil Doty that was both ranger office and contained public restrooms. Its completion in November 1941 represented nearly the last project completed by enrollees from Camp Oregon Caves and came in response to a complaint from the concessionaire who saw a need to monitor traffic on the road linking the lower parking lot with the cave entrance area, since space for cars near the Chateau was so limited that only hotel guests could use it.⁴⁰

Although buildings and utilities demanded periodic attention from both designers and enrollees, trail projects proved to be steadier work for the CCC. The landscape architects and engineers who worked for the NPS agreed with an initial assessment of the pedestrian circulation system at Oregon Caves that called for rebuilding all of the trails to conform with new standards set by the agency for gradient and width. In no case should grades exceed 15 percent, though the standards directed that gradient should be varied at regular intervals to avoid tiring leg muscles.

For trails attracting heavy use by hikers and horses, crews aimed to provide the frontcountry standard of four feet wide, yet they also made ten feet of vertical clearance for equestrian use. Where lighter foot traffic was expected, width could be narrowed to two feet—similar to many trails in the national forests—though the NPS at that time placed greater emphasis on designing loops and circuits (especially in a small area like Oregon Caves where the need to provide additional access for fire suppression was not great) aimed at enticing visitors into short backcountry jaunts.⁴¹ The standards and subsequent guidance in the form of CCC project manuals emphasized that trails should be built to blend with the park landscape so well that they might be rendered invisible to anyone not on them. This aesthetic preferred water bars over the use of culverts or bridges for cross drainage, but also emphasized mitigating the effects of trail construction by taking steps to repair ragged edges at the margins of tread through raking or even rounding slopes where necessary.⁴²

When the NPS and CCC arrived in 1934, only five trails existed on the monument outside the cave. These included a poorly defined path linking the main parking lot with the diesel plant located below the Chateau, as well as an unmaintained trail down Cave Creek that once served as an access route for visitors prior to the highway opening in 1922. A trail connected the exit tunnel with the cave entrance area so that visitors could make a circuit on their tour, but it was only two feet wide and slick in wet weather. The two remaining trails consisted of a steep ascent past the cave's upper entrance toward Lake Mountain that began at the Chalet, and a path leading to a large Douglas fir described as 14 feet in diameter. The latter route overtopped an older trail toward Williams for the first eight-tenths of a mile from the Chalet, but then diverged by gently climbing to cross Panther Creek where the "Big Tree" stood.⁴³

Enrollees began the reconstruction effort by widening the exit trail in November 1934, realigning it slightly so that visitors returned to the cave entrance rather than having to do a steeper descent to the hotel parking southwest of the Chateau.⁴⁴ It took until the following July to finish the project, one that included hauling fill to the exit in order to provide a place for visitors to assemble and enjoy a distant prospect framed by trees at the end of their tour.⁴⁵ Another reconstruction project started during the fall of 1934, this one taking place on the trail built by the Forest



FIGURE 49. CCC enrollees rebuilding the Exit Trail, early 1935. (NPS photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

Service to the Big Tree. It centered on abandoning one section of old trail that would have led visitors to the new storage tank in favor of a wider route that permitted the transport of materials to the site, but also lessened the gradient. Enrollees widened other sections of the trail to four feet in making it suitable for horses, but also placed several dry laid stone benches recessed into the trail's uphill side. They built another of these benches along a rerouted trail, one largely intended for trains of pack horses which otherwise had to go through the Chalet's breezeway. This route now commenced near the monument's boundary, running above the main parking area to an intersection with the Big Tree Trail that was situated below the water storage tank.⁴⁶

Landscape foreman Howard Buford suggested connecting the new route to Big Tree with the existing trail to Lake Mountain during the fall of 1936 in order to create a circuit. His idea came at a time when enrollees worked to improve the Lake Mountain Trail, and given how the new path to Big Tree was completed as of June 1935, a loop totaling 3.3 miles could be formed with less than a mile of new construction.⁴⁷ By the spring of 1937 the CCC had also finished building another circuit that utilized the Lake Mountain Trail, but this one included the Cliff Trail—a new route that furnished visitors an alternative to the Exit Trail when they



FIGURE 50. Picnic area in the canyon of Cave Creek, 1936. Trail connections are to the right. (NPS photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

finished a cave tour. The Cliff Trail allowed them to reach the cave entrance area by going above the exit tunnel and obtain views of the Illinois Valley in the distance. Enrollees built the route to cover six-tenths of a mile, but kept it two feet wide in order to limit scars. They needed to place stone steps in some sections to compensate for sudden changes in grade, something that also required the erection of retaining walls in several places. Landscape measures like bank sloping and placement of pine needles or other duff material were also included in the project since the NPS expected plenty of use.⁴⁸

The CCC started the monument's only other trail circuit in 1935, when they abandoned a path with switchbacks that went from the main parking lot to the diesel plant situated on Cave Creek. They built a route meant to link a trailhead near the concessionaire's service station with a new picnic area built in the canyon.⁴⁹ Another year passed before another crew of enrollees constructed a short trail some two feet wide that connected No Name Creek with the end of the service road running west of the Chateau. Lange called this segment the best example of "natural trail construction" within the monument, due to the care taken to eliminate scars through bank sloping and placing duff on exposed surfaces.⁵⁰ By March 1941 this trail had been connected with the

picnic area located above Cave Creek once the CCC built a route for horses less than two miles in length, a project that included an additional connection to the picnic area and a footbridge over No Name Creek.⁵¹

Landscape projects followed a similar pattern to that of trails, in that the CCC began by reconstructing features that appeared when the Forest Service administered Oregon Caves. Once again, something of a template and footprint had been established under the Forest Service, so the NPS directed the enrollees to rebuild some features such as retaining walls or pools, expand planting, as well as add a number of new components. Doerner's reconnaissance report of May 1934 pointed to the need for landscaping around buildings near the cave entrance. He noted that the poor character of retaining walls marred the scene, as did a rectangular "trout pool" located at the base of a waterfall created by how Cave Creek tumbled about ten feet to the road below as it emerged from the cavern.⁵²

Repair or replacement of the existing walls took place over the next five years, with most new construction not initiated until 1937. Lange commented during the summer of 1935 that many walls contained small stones that seemed out of proportion to the scale of the surroundings, something he and the enrollees attempted to counter by introducing plants into the joints of the dry laid walls.⁵³ Some walls simply had to be rebuilt with larger rock hauled to the site, especially if they appeared to be structurally unsound. Enrollees first undertook new construction when they replaced a rapidly failing log wall erected during the Chateau's construction with one of stone near the hotel's kitchen entrance in early 1937. That project seemed to provide the CCC crews with the experience needed for another wall constructed as part of widening the road connecting the main parking area and the Chalet.⁵⁴ By the fall of 1937 enrollees were at work building another wall for an expanded parking area west of the Chateau, a project that required 2,500 yards of fill. One section of this retaining wall gave way during the winter rains of 1939-40, but the NPS took emergency measures to limit resulting damage.⁵⁵ The CCC achieved better results with a crenulated masonry wall they built in 1940, one that defines the walkway between the Chalet and cave entrance. In conforming to specifications issued by the NPS for contracted stone masonry, however, it more resembled designed features along Rim Drive encircling Crater Lake



FIGURE 51. Masonry wall at center right with dry laid walls to left in this photo of the plaza, August 1941. Above the old Chalet are the cottages. (Photo by George Grant, National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection.)

than other dry laid rockwork at the monument.⁵⁶

The masonry wall essentially completed landscape work around the cave entrance, an effort that began with sketches by Doerner and then Lange for how the plaza area and hotel landscape should look. Their drawings led to the first CCC plantings in the plaza, though these rhododendron and tan oak near the Chateau were limited to just a few specimens. Crews began picking rock to build retaining walls in the Chateau's courtyard once a tractor hoist became available for the heavy lifting in December 1934. They left a monument to Elijah Davidson in place near the cave entrance, but transformed the plaza's appearance with a new campfire pit and log seats located at the base of some stone steps leading to the Chalet.⁵⁷ Large logs of Port Orford-cedar served as guardrails at the road margins through the plaza, but they also separated cars from pedestrian assembly areas such as the fire pit. Enrollees also made the rectangular pool that drew a negative review from Doerner into a more naturally shaped feature flanked by transplanted trees and then added stone steps for a walkway that provided new pedestrian access between the cave entrance and the road below it.⁵⁸

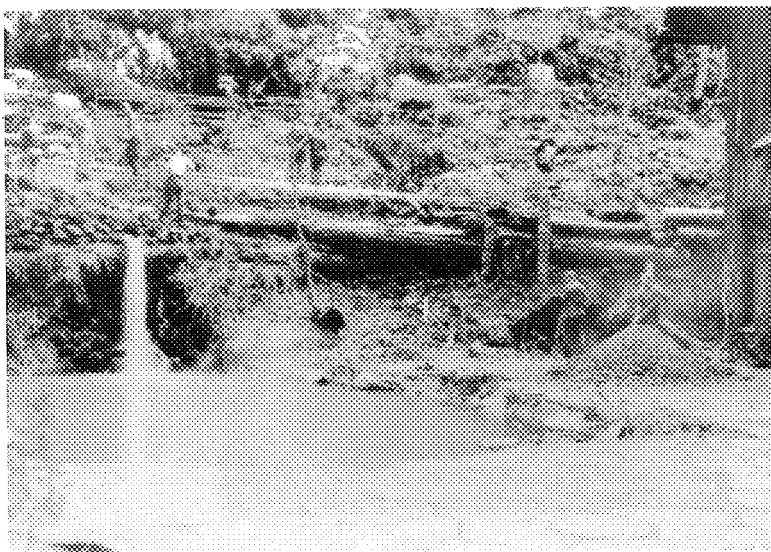


FIGURE 52. CCC enrollees working on retaining walls in the Chateau's courtyard, early 1935. (OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

Even more dramatic changes occurred next to the Chateau, where the CCC took an unfinished courtyard and began enlarging a pool located next to doors leading to the dining room. Enrollees employed wood blocks as a sort of flagstone paving around the pool, but also replaced log cribbing with dry laid stonework before embellishing the courtyard's appearance by transplanting trees, shrubs, and ferns in June 1935.⁵⁹ The only other landscape additions to the plaza area with CCC funding resulted from the need for outdoor lighting and fire protection. Three rustic light standards were installed near the Chateau in the spring of 1938, though recessed lights along the road between the main parking lot and hotel became more prevalent since the NPS wanted a more "restful and subdued" nighttime effect than what additional overhead standards might have produced.⁶⁰ The last CCC project in the plaza began during the winter of 1939-40, when enrollees built two concrete vaults faced with rock for fire hydrants and hose storage near the Chateau. Over the following summer they added two wooden "houses" for keeping hoses that could be attached to the hydrants located next to the concessionaire's cabins.⁶¹

Several of Lange's preliminary sketches done in early 1937 were aimed at how best to maximize space for parking in the main



FIGURE 53. The monument's main parking lot in 1938. (NPS photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

lot located near the monument boundary. They represented a start to the only other major landscape improvement implemented over the following year or so. Bank sloping done on an old landslide widened the lot in 1936 and triggered subsequent work meant to establish a vehicular circulation pattern at the site. Crews placed a long and thin island in the center of the lot, one delineated by partially buried logs treated with creosote but with individual boulders situated between them. Lange planned for the lot to accommodate more than 100 cars, most of which conveyed visitors who did not stay overnight at the monument. That meant there was a need for garbage cans, to be covered by cedar logs hollowed to fit around them. This design represented what could be the most elaborate attempt to make even small landscape features blend with their surroundings. Other CCC landscape projects at the site included plantings in the island, stone curbing placed at the base of the bank slope for purposes of delineating the lot, as well as two signs placed upright with routed letters carved into the diagonal face of treated logs.⁶²

Lange also sought to separate cars from pedestrians, especially where visitors had to walk on the road linking the day use parking with the plaza and cave entrance area. He advocated widening the road to allow for building a walk parallel to the narrow driving surface, which meant laying 700 feet of stone curb on one side. Like the projects he supervised in Rim Village and along Rim Drive at Crater Lake, the walk featured asphalt paving, a component that the CCC finished by the end of June 1937. Lange was

so pleased with the results that he continued to press for a similar walk on the front of the Chateau, but this project went nowhere once the superintendent at Crater Lake questioned the need for it.⁶³

Internal opposition by line managers illustrated the reality that landscape architects had influence over the design and implementation of CCC projects, but were never given free reign at Oregon Caves or in any other unit administered by the NPS. They could not move immediately on a project when other NPS staff members objected, as in the case of cleaning up construction debris below the Chateau, where Lange and the landscape foremen wanted to create pools in Cave Creek by introducing additional rocks as dams that imparted what they saw as a desirable "cascading, rippling effect." Regional specialists viewed such modification of the stream as unacceptable, so this project component was dropped and the cleanup finally proceeded in 1938.⁶⁴

Managers and staff nevertheless supported Lange's sign projects, which they recognized as a key part of design for improving the landscape's function and appearance at Oregon Caves. Although trail signs and similar devices placed in the main parking lot remained modest, the CCC built an impressive "entrance motif" at the monument's boundary along the Caves Highway in 1936. It consisted of a large redwood sign with routed letters suspended from a bollard of upright cedar logs on a stone base, with one log projected horizontally in order to suspend the sign.⁶⁵ A year later crews affixed a second sign on one side of the first, this one to indicate where motorists entered the Siskiyou National Forest from the monument. It matched the entrance signs at Crater Lake, having raised wood letters painted chrome orange against a brown stained background for visibility at night.⁶⁶

Although perhaps more attractive than most, the motifs could not be considered uncommon. They could be seen at the boundaries of some cities and were also used to indicate the entrances of parks, as well as campgrounds in the national forests.⁶⁷ As Camp Oregon Caves began producing signs for placement along Rim Drive at Crater Lake in 1938, however, enrollees fashioned some mile markers for placement at road junctions along the Oregon Caves Highway. Not only did the five markers extend CCC signage beyond Grayback toward Cave Junction, these sported the unusual look of routed letters carved into a planed surface on one side of an upright log. Each marker indicated the number of miles remaining to be traveled until the motorist reached Oregon Caves,



FIGURE 54. Mileage sign at “Robinson’s Corner” on the Oregon Caves Highway, 1938. (NPS photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

something Lange explained was done in support of the monument’s concessionaire.⁶⁸

Expanded concession facilities

In reinforcing how the NPS and CCC worked to continue the public-private partnership begun under Forest Service administration of the monument, the mile markers most likely contributed to

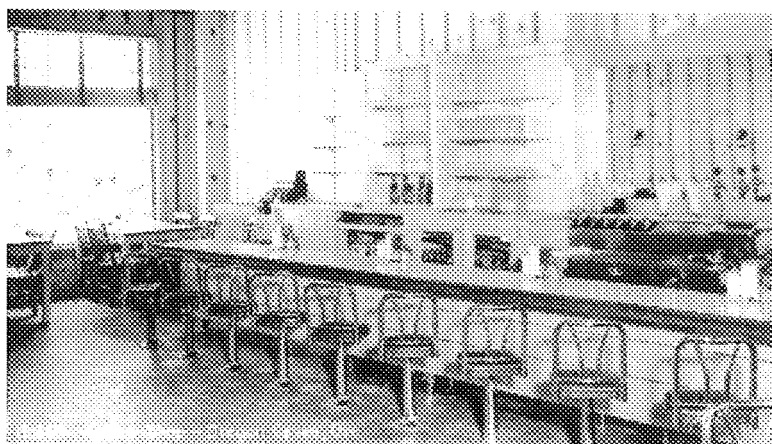


FIGURE 55. Coffeeshop in the Chateau, late 1930s. (Photo by Sawyers, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

the concessionaire proposing to build an information bureau at the junction of the Caves and Redwood highways in 1943. Although not completed until the postwar years, the company's board of directors in Grants Pass had at least indicated their willingness to replace the information bureau they once operated at Grayback. Their rationale for a new structure in Cave Junction was that it might generate business from passing motorists and other casual travelers that might not otherwise be generated.⁶⁹ Private funding for further developing the monument had continued even in the midst of financial strain posed by building the Chateau, though it took the company until 1937 to open its new coffeeshop, a facility largely accessed by visitors from the hotel courtyard. An improving economy by that time no doubt helped revenue, since annual visitation at the monument almost doubled from the 32,484 in 1935 to 59,434 just two years later.

More visitors dictated the company's need to hire additional staff, but new employees faced a housing shortage. Men stayed in the guide dormitory while women slept upstairs in the Chalet, but both structures had been constructed before 1928, when annual visitation never topped 26,000. With sites for new buildings so limited at the monument, Lange opened a dialog among NPS officials in the spring of 1937 about how to guide the expansion of concession facilities. Replacing the Chalet with a new hotel came out of discussions with the concessionaire, though this came with the complication of having to find a place for a new women's dor-

mitory.⁷⁰ Stymied for the time being, the company deferred plans for the structure and instead had an architect prepare drawings in order to expand the housing available for men in the guide dormitory.⁷¹ Work to enlarge the guide dormitory took place in 1940, a few months prior to the NPS and its concessionaire reaching an agreement on how the Chalet would be rebuilt. A new building was to contain a considerably larger dormitory for women on the two upper floors, but also housed a novelty store, restrooms, nursery, and ticket booth at ground level.⁷²

With American involvement in World War II virtually certain by the summer of 1941, and the CCC camp decommissioned by October, Lium (who had since returned to the company payroll from the Forest Service) knew to stockpile materials for the new Chalet. He and a small crew completely rebuilt the structure prior to the lean visitor season of 1942 (gas rationing and other wartime measures limited leisure travel), widening its footprint with additional excavation and adding a third story. It signified the virtual completion of planned development at the monument, but the NPS kept a relatively short list of maintenance and repair projects that the CCC had not undertaken, chief among them being the failed retaining wall near the Chateau. The number of projects expanded once a large slide in late 1942 altered the face of the main parking area, destroying the company's service station as well as the picnic area built by the CCC below it. Fixing the parking lot had to wait due to the war's effect on staffing and funding for the NPS. Both fell to less than half of what they were just a year earlier, just as travel to the parks dropped commensurately.⁷³

NPS master plans for Oregon Caves

By the middle of 1942, the Chateau and new Chalet stood squarely at the axis of a resort-cum-landscape garden and represented one of the best examples in any park of how to apply the principles of rustic architecture and naturalistic design. Not only did the development allow for day and overnight use of a small site, though the circulation systems and structures at Oregon Caves seemed to overcome the limitations imposed by steep topography and a remote location. The use of centralized planning by the NPS (where drawings from designers on the ground had to be approved at successively higher levels in the agency) is often given much of the credit for the success of park projects completed dur-

ing the interwar period. To some extent this is true at Oregon Caves, where the monument's development by the concessionaire and the CCC seemed to reflect what was on the large master plan sheets that were approved by NPS officials stationed at Crater Lake, as well as those in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.⁷⁴

At Oregon Caves and other parks during the 1930s, the sheets (often site plans) were large enough to be rolled for storage but included summaries of the work completed to that point along with projections for development anticipated over the next year or two on smaller sheets interleaved between the drawings. Lange assembled the master plans for Oregon Caves, drawing two sheets in 1936, then updating them and adding another sheet in 1938. He followed a template established for larger areas like Crater Lake, where the drawings and summary sheets were organized into sections covering road networks, trail systems, major developed areas, and minor developments. He noted in two of his reports written in 1935 how field survey allowed him to create a topographic base map, so that planned developments could then be superimposed at two different scales—one for the monument as a whole (to show circulation systems like trails), while the other needed to be twenty feet to the inch to accurately depict the main developed area around the Chateau.⁷⁵ He subsequently commented that the master plan served only as general direction at a site that did not allow for radical changes in its development.⁷⁶ Drawings for individual projects still had to be sketched, traced, finalized, checked, and then receive final approval from more than one management layer in the NPS before they could be implemented. Unforeseen circumstances often brought about changes or adjustments in the field by the CCC who functioned as day labor (direct hires) rather than contractors who bid according to advertised plans and specifications. Instead of necessarily reflecting the centralized control of development by the NPS, master plans justified the outlays made for CCC projects, as did the lengthy illustrated reports written by landscape architects, engineers, and camp foremen.

Even if the master plans were descended from how English gentry once designed their pleasure grounds, NPS control over Oregon Caves remained far from absolute. The concessionaire provided the cave tours and already occupied (on a lease basis) virtually all of the area that could be developed. To the extent that Oregon Caves somehow exemplified central planning done by the

NPS, it did so with the company firmly ensconced in central position—both physically and in regard to how the monument's clientele experienced the site. Even the two most ubiquitous characteristics of design there (cedar bark siding and dry laid retaining walls) had emerged almost spontaneously from the concessionaire, becoming so pervasive by the time NPS officials arrived in 1934 that most of what Lange and his landscape foremen did was improve the existing landscape with CCC labor rather than use another palette to create anew.⁷⁷

Other vehicles shaping visitor experience

While the NPS tended to focus on the details of physical development at Oregon Caves during this period, most newspaper publicity and travel writing centered on how the resort facilitated visitor experience. Much of it was connected with a cave tour that often emphasized the weird or whimsical (something evident in the names of many rooms and formations), but visitors who stayed at the Chateau or in one of the cabins were also treated to a nightly program of music and entertainment. The ability to play an instrument or sing influenced how Sabin chose new hires (who were generally college students) since the company advertised this program on its promotional literature.⁷⁸ At its zenith, each program opened with a trombone and trumpet duet (the "Miserere" from "Il Trovatore"), where the players stationed themselves on opposite sides of the canyon above Cave Creek, to be followed by vocal and instrumental music that emanated from the steps below the Chalet.⁷⁹

The musical program appealed to many of the guests who stayed in the Chateau or one of the cottages, though relatively few visitors opted for a second or third night at Oregon Caves. Guests ate their breakfast and lunch in the coffeeshop, with the evening meal served in the hotel dining room. Music from radio stations in Portland and San Francisco often played as they ate, with soft melodies occasionally heard in the evenings from the Chateau's roof speakers. Guests and employees alike enjoyed a special treat on Sunday night, when pipe organ music came over the roof speakers after the evening program. One employee remembered that hearing the sounds of Paul Carson building his "Bridge to Dreamland," inspired some couples to listen at a secluded spot on one of the nearby trails.⁸⁰

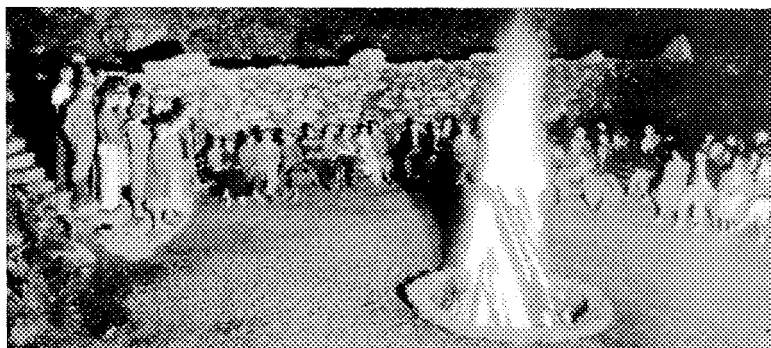


FIGURE 56. Nightly musical entertainment for guests of the Oregon Caves Resort, about 1937. (Photo by Sawyers, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

A campfire program given by the resident NPS employee constituted more regular and edifying fare during those summer evenings. Ranger-naturalists who gave the talks, however, objected to the noise from the waterfall nearest the cave, so Lange proposed to fix this distraction by diverting it for a few minutes. His landscape foreman, Ed Meola, and another man completed the project in 1939, one listed among the CCC accounts as “Silencing Waterfall.” The pair blasted a ditch in order to place a corrugated metal culvert that diverted Cave Creek below the Chateau. It worked to quiet the noise of falling water, but also provided a means to avoid silting both pools when Rowley and his crew “washed down” cave formations along the tour route each spring.⁸¹

Promoters saw such contrivances as fitting and even “natural,” because they somehow suited the setting. Even one of the ranger-naturalists at Crater Lake who taught geology at the University of Oregon echoed this point in his draft of a brochure to be issued by the NPS:

“After his not too strenuous trip through the Caves, one can lodge for the night in one of the most attractive Chateaus in the entire Northwest and after dinner listen to a campfire program of music of unusual excellence in the shadows of a gigantic fir forest. When one drops off to sleep in his comfortable Chateau bed, he may retrace his steps through a dream forest made up of shadowy forms in part belonging to the upper groves and those of the mysterious nether regions of the Caves.⁸²

The practice of issuing brochures (or “circulars” as they were often called) to promote Oregon Caves harkened back to the Forest Service that planned to print a brochure in 1921, but postponed the job until completion of the highway in June of the following year.⁸³ Within five years this circular grew to sixteen pages, which the Forest Service illustrated with photographs. As a device intended to shape visitor expectations of the site, this advertising medium supplied justification for efforts by the Forest Service and its concessionaire to further enhance the landscape garden that had been created at Oregon Caves. By presenting the monument as both restful and Edenic, the circular also worked to precondition how people were to view the monument upon their arrival.⁸⁴

It could be that the concessionaire promoted the monument more effectively than the Forest Service did in having 26,000 brochures printed in 1925.⁸⁵ Information booths, service clubs, auto camps, and hotels served as distribution channels for reaching potential visitors who resided on the west coast, particularly those in California. That state routinely furnished more visitors to the monument each year than did Oregon, and with more than ten times greater population, also represented a much larger potential market.⁸⁶ The company had these facts in mind when advertising Oregon Caves in magazines, but they also tried to link the monument with the drawing power of redwood groves in California then being assembled into a chain of state parks along the coast highway leading to San Francisco. The concessionaire pitched Oregon Caves to be a northern portal to the redwoods, even though the monument was situated more than 50 miles from any such grove that a motorist might see. Its stockholders and the boosters in Grants Pass thus maintained an active role in the Redwood Empire Association, a tourism group whose membership promoted the preservation of roadside scenic attractions as a way of bringing more business to the region.⁸⁷

Oregon Caves enjoyed a less central place in NPS promotional efforts, even though the agency had access to a national clientele and had been producing leaflets, brochures, and small booklets on the areas it administered from earliest days of its existence.⁸⁸ In contrast to the muddled place that its national monuments once occupied in the Forest Service’s worldview, the NPS saw them in a fairly stratified way—as “second class sites” in relation to the national parks. In the NPS mindset of the 1930s national parks were the premier destinations for visitors within the larger system



FIGURE 57. A cave woman informs a prospect of what awaits him at the Oregon Caves Chateau while they are in the San Francisco ferry terminal, 1939. (Photo courtesy of the Josephine County Historical Society.)

of units it administered, whereas national monuments represented an enticing stopover for a few hours or more, yet one best located between jewels in the crown. As of 1934, NPS-administered Oregon Caves stood midway between Crater Lake and a future national park in the redwoods (the newly dedicated Humboldt State Redwoods Park being the top candidate), in the same way that Lava Beds was situated between Crater Lake and Lassen Volcanic, or Craters of the Moon lay between Mount Rainier and Yellowstone.⁸⁹ Even if the NPS stationed one or more of its seasonal ranger naturalists at Oregon Caves each summer (in comparison to Forest Service practice of not staffing the monument after 1921), the agency presence belied the fact that national monuments represented collateral duty for park superintendents who exercised their management authority and promotional skills from a distance. Like Lava Beds, Oregon Caves represented a satellite area of responsibility to the superintendent at Crater Lake.⁹⁰



FIGURE 58. Guests at the Chateau could read about attractions located elsewhere in the Redwood Empire at the hotel's front desk. (Oregon Caves Company photo, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

Although the monument might be relegated to secondary status in the hierarchy of park units administered by the NPS during the 1930s, expansion in agency responsibility during that decade indirectly enhanced the position of Oregon Caves as a tourist attraction within the region. Already a gateway to the redwoods, as well as Crater Lake and peaks located further north, visitors could also come to the monument as part of a tour centered on Oregon's renowned coastline. The NPS exercised control over the location of CCC camps in state parks, in addition to much of the work done in them, since federal funding underwrote virtually all of these projects during the Depression. Sparked by the willingness of the state to buy land for parks along the Roosevelt Highway (U.S. 101), the NPS served as the conduit for developing some of them.⁹¹ Being somewhat analogous to state parks in the redwood region of California, this chain of spectacular parks along the coastal highway accounted for seventy percent of all state park use in Oregon during the 1930s. Not only did Oregonians use these parks, but the coast also drew visitors from California and other states. They injected a badly needed sum of \$19 million into Oregon's economy in 1934, a statistic that prompted the legislature to create a travel information office within Oregon's highway department (which also managed state parks), less than two years later.⁹²

As one of the best-positioned and brightest stars in Oregon's galaxy of scenic attractions, it made sense for the new travel infor-

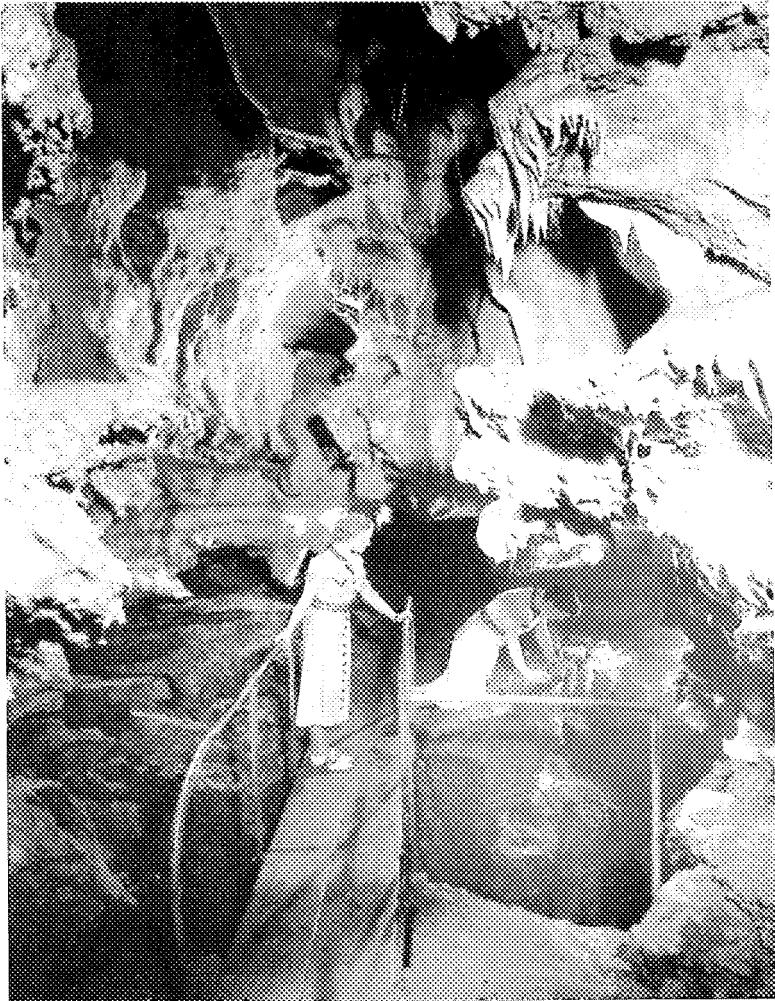


FIGURE 59. Models pause to gaze at the River Styx, 1937. (Oregon State Highway Commission photo by Ralph Gifford, courtesy of Oregon State University Archives.)

mation office to help publicize the monument to out-of-state visitors. The office soon hired a professional photographer named Ralph Gifford to supplement news releases and travel articles with a wide range of scenic images free of impediments such as copyright. Gifford traveled around the state to secure hundreds of photos, including some at Oregon Caves. He followed in the footsteps of his father Benjamin and other pioneers of commercial scenic photography who previously adopted all the conventions of

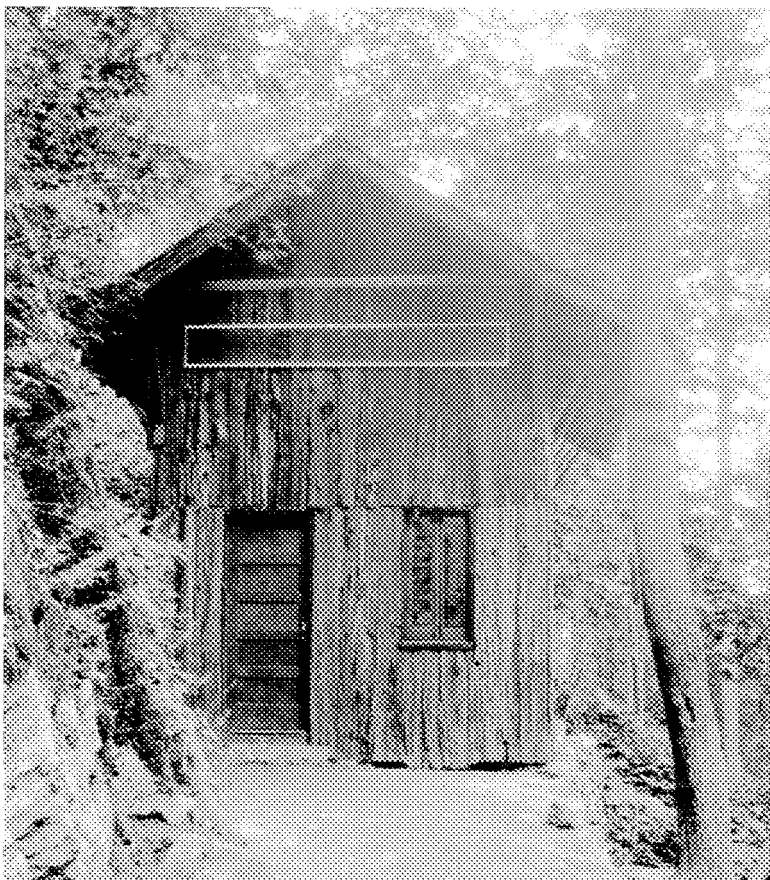


FIGURE 60. Kiser's studio near the cave entrance, about 1927. (U.S. Forest Service photo, Siskiyou National Forest.)

another medium, landscape painting, in promoting western wonders with a camera beginning in the 1870s.⁹³

Starting with Will Steel and his companions in 1888, several promoters made attempts to capitalize on the potential market for images of the cave and its setting prior to the highway's completion in 1922, but these photographs hardly put Oregon Caves anywhere near the center of a burgeoning travel industry centered on driving to experience scenic attractions. Only when road infrastructure responded to rapidly escalating automobile ownership could commercial photographers assist with fueling visitation that could, in turn, make developing a resort like Oregon Caves financially viable. Two competitors, Fred Kiser and Frank Patterson, led the way in producing large numbers of picture postcards of

Oregon Caves and its surroundings beginning in 1922, though both ended up pursuing greener pastures in California with the Great Depression's onset. Both men also sold framed scenic photographs, with most individually hand colored to imitate landscape paintings. Kiser restricted his subjects to mountain scenes of the Pacific Northwest for the most part, though he also ventured to the redwoods and the Oregon coast. Based in Portland since 1904, Kiser responded to an expanding market for scenic views during the 1920s by opening branch studios at Crater Lake, Multnomah Falls, and Oregon Caves.⁹⁴ Patterson, by contrast, operated exclusively from his headquarters in Medford, where he initially specialized in views of Crater Lake and Oregon Caves. By 1926 the Patterson Studio produced more postcards than any other such operation in the west. His stock included photos of city streets, auto camps, and scenic subjects on the Pacific Highway (U.S. 99) from Eugene to Redding, and along the Redwood Highway (U.S. 199) from Grants Pass to Ukiah.⁹⁵ In 1928 Patterson claimed that the Oregon Caves Resort could be counted as his largest dealer in postcards, though within a few years all that remained of his work were the larger hand-colored views that adorned the lobby level of the Chateau and even these were eventually outnumbered by Kiser's work displayed at the same location.⁹⁶

The demise of Kiser and Patterson as scenic photographers by no means spelled the end of picture postcards as souvenirs, or as a device that could both shape expectations among visitors who wanted to validate their experience for friends and family. Sawyers, a Portland-based company, acquired Kiser's archive on its way to becoming one of the largest postcard manufacturers in the United States.⁹⁷ While hand colored framed enlargements of scenic views declined in popularity during the advent of color film, Sawyers brought back stereo photography in a new form by patenting View-Master in 1939. Its inventor, William Gruber, thought of placing movie film on a reel for use in a compact viewer so that full color stereo transparencies could be mass-produced. He could do little more than experiment with the stereo process until meeting Harold Graves, then president of Sawyers, in 1938. This meeting took place at Oregon Caves, after Gruber's wife supposedly rubbed a "wishing stone" on the tour, and then told her husband that she wanted something good to come of his idea.⁹⁸ He and his stereo "rig" (two cameras mounted on a tripod) came out

Feb. 6, 1940.

W. B. GRUBER

2,189,285

STEREOSCOPIC VIEWING DEVICE

Filed Jan. 20, 1939

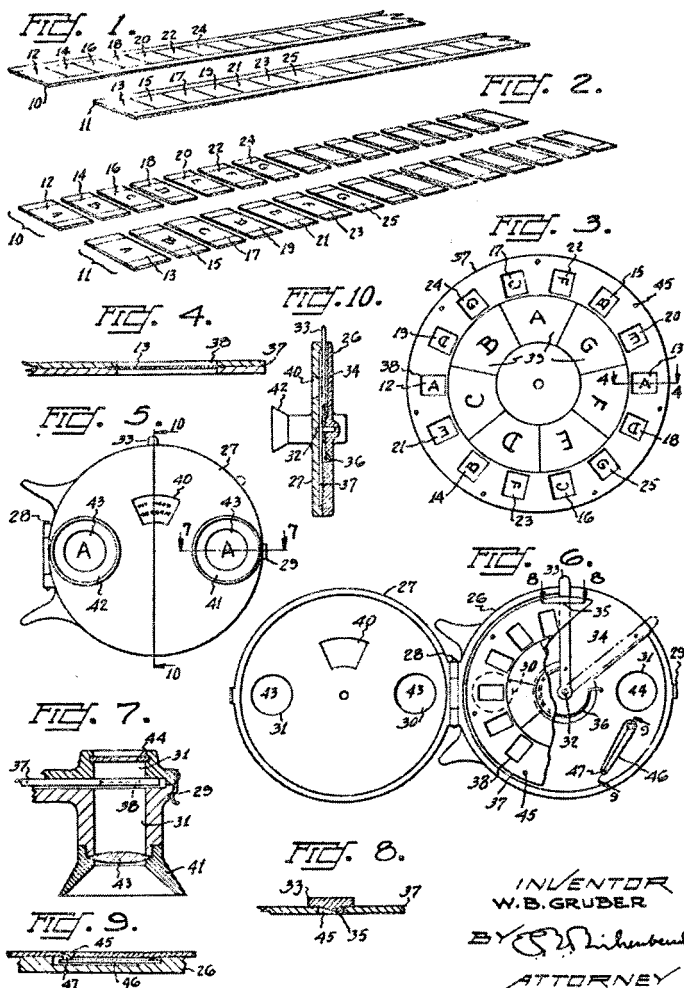


FIGURE 61. Drawing to accompany the patent application for View Master.

of the cave and directly in front of Graves, who was attempting to photograph some deer. They discussed what Gruber had in mind that night in the Chateau and subsequently made views of Oregon Caves into one of the first reels when View-Master went into production late in the following year.⁹⁹

View-Master played an admittedly small role in promoting the

monument, especially in the years prior to American entry in World War II, but the sales potential of Oregon Caves was such that it hardly lacked for promotional devices during this period. One writer published his impressions of the two-hour cave tour led by Rowley as a book in 1939, calling it "Enchanted Corridors" and included several photographs of formations from the Artcraft Studio of Grants Pass. Despite the omission of surface features like the forest trails, author Wayland Dunham reinforced the perception of the monument as landscape garden with a playful narrative of an underground journey, one with plenty in the way of allegory and mythological allusions.¹⁰⁰

"Enchanted Corridors" did not possess widespread appeal judging by the small number of copies printed, but the monument featured prominently in another book devoted to Oregon's scenic attractions published in 1941. Warren D. Smith devoted all of three pages to how the monument could be experienced, leading with a bewitching cave tour. Smith then brought the reader from the cave's discovery by Davidson in 1874 through a short, but seemingly effortless progression to NPS administration that began six decades later. To justify his assessment that the concessionaire ran the top resort in Oregon, Smith cited a combination of reasons. Not only had movement through the cave been augmented by enlarged passages and dependable lights, but visitors could also enjoy quiet evenings filled with music and stories near the entrance, where all the landscaping appeared "in harmony with the wild background of this rugged country." Smith also made a point of mentioning two individuals; Rowley, who played the roles of guide and sage, and Sabin, the host who provided excellent evening entertainment as well as fine creature comforts at moderate cost.¹⁰¹

In all his praise for the development and operation at Oregon Caves, Smith failed to mention what had to be the most unique way of promoting this or any other unit in the national park system. The prospect of opening a road to the monument in 1922 led to forming the Oregon Cavemen as a booster group in Grants Pass. They bore some resemblance to organizations founded to promote other towns, such as the Craterians in Medford or the Pirates of Coos Bay, but the Cavemen quickly became known for wearing animal skins and publicity stunts that included kidnapping celebrities and inducting four U.S. presidents as members.¹⁰² Led by a figure called "Chief Bighorn" and his associate

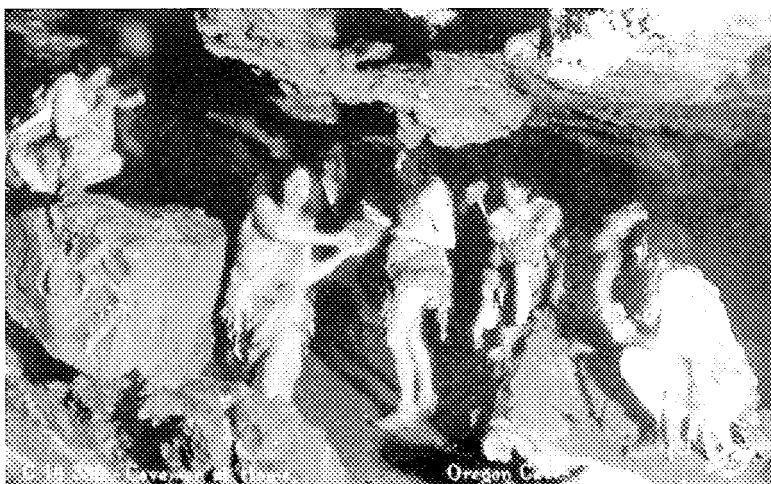


FIGURE 62. Members of the Oregon Cavemen posed along the tour route, late 1930s. (Sawyers photo, private collection.)

“Wingfeather,” they dedicated the Caveman Bridge over the Rogue River as the northern terminus for the Redwood Highway in 1931, lent their name to Grants Pass High School, and made a point of posing for photographs at the monument each year when the Chateau opened for business. Although such promotion can be considered unusual even in show caves, it fit well with a script understood by most Americans and people of European descent that allowed for the association of both Indians and cavemen to a primitive Edenic garden. With direct connections to company stockholders and with the Grants Pass chamber of commerce, the Cavemen also functioned as an arm of the Redwood Empire Association in actively maintaining their city’s link with the monument in popular imagination.¹⁰³

Oregon Caves attracted visitors in such numbers in 1941 that the superintendent at Crater Lake told the company’s attorney about carrying capacity in the cave being reached on some summer days. Not only did 1,600 visitors or more on tours each day result in unsatisfactory service, it caused a parking shortage at a national monument which could offer only a limited number of areas flat enough to accommodate vehicles. After proposing a ceiling on the number of visitors allowed through the cave each day, the superintendent also stated that Oregon Caves had almost been fully developed.¹⁰⁴ He noted that some other park areas faced a similar situation and this could make for some difficult choices,

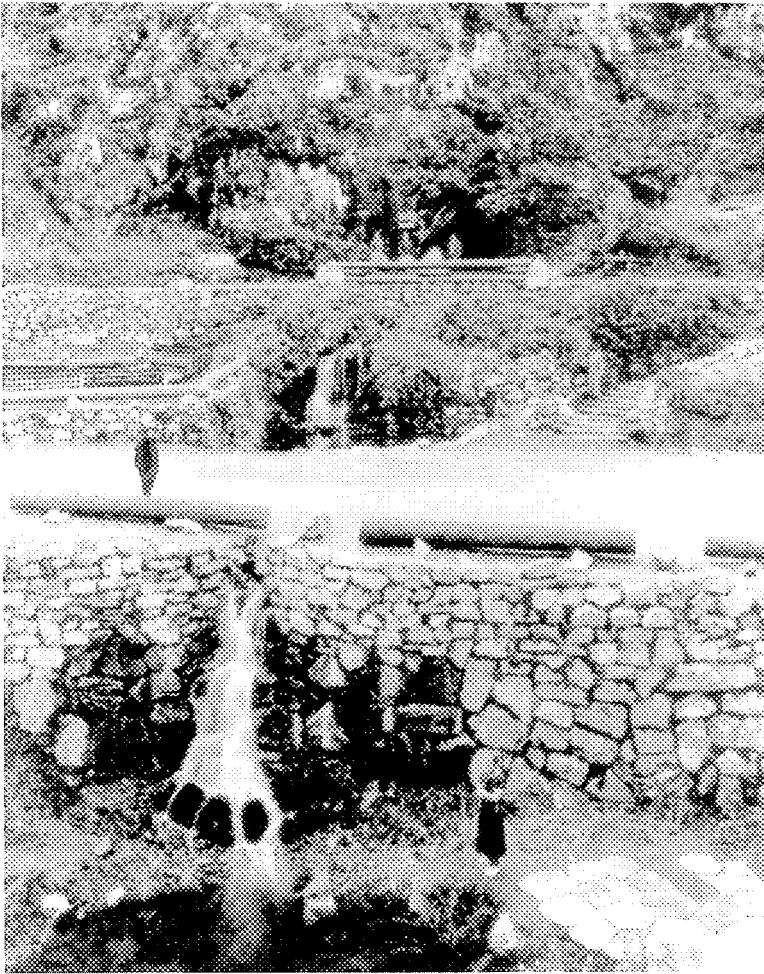


FIGURE 63. Retaining walls and pools built by the CCC below the cave entrance, about 1938. (Photo by Francis G. Lange, OCNM Museum and Archives Collections.)

especially where steep topography restricted the opportunity to create more parking or build additional structures to support a larger operation. The superintendent avoided the fact that the landscape garden created at Oregon Caves consisted of more than physical features; that it also reinforced the prevailing patterns driving visitor use, such that once established, fundamental changes might lie beyond the grasp of even the most determined administrator.¹⁰⁵